02/22/24 BIG FOOD

Common U.S. Food Additives May Cause Cancer + More

The Defender's Big Food NewsWatch brings you the latest headlines related to industrial food companies and their products, including ultra-processed foods, food additives, contaminants, GMOs and lab-grown meat and their toxic effects on human health. The views expressed in the excerpts from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender.

By The Defender Staff

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Common U.S. Food Additives May Cause Cancer

Newsweek reported:

> Scientists have issued a warning after finding a common food additive may be associated with an increased risk of cancer.
>
> In the U.S., over half of our daily energy intake comes from ultra-processed foods — foods that usually contain a long list of unrecognizable ingredients like preservatives, emulsifiers, sweeteners and artificial flavorings and colors. Increasingly, we are learning that these ultra-processed products are associated with an increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, mental health problems, diabetes and certain forms of cancer.
>
> In a new study, published in the journal PLoS Medicine, researchers from France have found yet more evidence that common ingredients in these

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foods may increase our risk of certain cancers, especially breast and prostate cancers.

In particular, the team focused on emulsifiers, common additives used in ready meals, cakes, cookies, breads and spreads to improve texture, taste and shelf life. These include modified starches, xanthan gum, pectins, and mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids.

After an average follow-up of seven years, the researchers found that individuals who had a higher dietary intake of mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids — also known as E471 — were at a 15% higher risk of developing cancer. In particular, higher intakes of E471 were associated with a 24% higher risk of breast cancer and a 46% higher risk of prostate cancer. Carrageenan, another emulsifier often denoted as E407 was also associated with a 32% higher risk of breast cancer among women.

Pregnant Women in Indiana Show Fourfold Increase in Toxic Weedkiller in Urine — Study

The Guardian reported:

Pregnant women in a key U.S. farm state are showing increasing amounts of a toxic weedkiller in their urine, a rise that comes alongside the climbing use of the chemicals in agriculture, according to a study published on Friday.

The study, led by the Indiana University School of Medicine, showed that 70% of pregnant women tested in Indiana between 2020 and 2022 had a herbicide called dicamba in their urine, up from 28% from a similar analysis for the period 2010-12. The earlier study included women in Indiana, Illinois and Ohio.

Notably, the study also found that along with a larger percentage of women showing the presence of dicamba in their bodies, the concentrations of the weed-killing chemical increased more than fourfold.

Paul Winchester, a clinical professor of pediatrics at the Indiana University School of Medicine who was not involved in this study, called the findings "sobering" and said that there was growing evidence that these chemicals can be harmful to fetuses. "Fetal DNA is being shaped by these exposures," he said. "What we're seeing in other chemicals that have had longer pathways of study is that this is not benign exposure."

Dangerous Sleep Problems May Be Caused by Your Diet

Newsweek reported:

Your diet could be increasing your risk of dangerous snoring and sleep problems, a new study has warned. Considering the link between obesity and sleep apnea, caloric restriction diets have been linked to a reduced risk of sleep apnea. But much less is known about the relationship between sleep apnea and diet quality.

In a recent study, published in the European Respiratory Journal, researchers from Flinders University in South Australia analyzed data from 14,210 individuals to determine whether diet quality had any influence on an individual's likelihood of developing sleep apnea.

The study focused on three diets: healthy plant-based diets, which were rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes; animal-based diets, which were rich in animal fats, dairy, eggs, meat and seafood; and unhealthy plant-based diets, rich in refined grains, sugar-sweetened drinks, sweets, desserts, and salty food.

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Those who ate a healthy, plant-based diet were 19% less likely to suffer from obstructive sleep apnea compared to those with diets containing very little plant-based food. However, those on an unhealthy plant-based diet were 22% more at risk of developing the condition than those who ate healthier plant-based diets, suggesting that avoiding animal products alone was not enough to significantly reduce your risk of developing this condition.

Could Ultra-Processed Foods Be the New 'Silent' Killer?

Florida Atlantic University reported:

> From fizzy drinks to cereals and packaged snacks to processed meat, ultra-processed foods are packed with additives. Oil, fat, sugar, starch and sodium, as well as emulsifiers such as carrageenan, mono- and diglycerides, carboxymethylcellulose, polysorbate and soy lecithin, continue to strip food of healthy nutrients while introducing other ingredients that could also be detrimental to human health.
>
> Hundreds of novel ingredients never encountered by human physiology are now found in nearly 60% of the average adult's diet and nearly 70% of children's diets in the United States.
>
> While obesity and lack of physical activity are well-recognized contributors to avoidable morbidity and mortality in the U.S., another emerging hazard is the unprecedented consumption of these ultra-processed foods in the standard American diet. This may be the new "silent" killer, as was unrecognized high blood pressure in previous decades.
>
> Physicians from Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine explored this hypothesis and provided important insights to healthcare providers in a battle where the entertainment industry, the food industry and public policy do not align with their patients' needs. Their findings are published in a commentary in The American Journal of Medicine.

Consumers Are Tired of Price Increases. Big Brands Are Paying Attention.

NBC News reported:

> Many companies that raised prices during the recovery from the pandemic cited higher costs for the ingredients, materials and labor needed to provide goods and services that many consumers were racing to buy.
>
> Those price hikes, exacerbated by supply chain snags in late 2021, helped push the annual inflation rate to a four-decade high of more than 9% by summer 2022. It has since fallen to 3.1%, meaning prices overall are still going up, albeit more slowly.
>
> That has put customers in a game of chicken with companies that continue to raise prices.
>
> Kraft Heinz, the maker of iconic mac-and-cheese and ketchup brands, reported a 7.1% decline in yearly sales, suggesting it was hitting the limit of how far it could hike prices before customers cut and run. The company raised prices by 2.5% across its product line over the course of 2023, after doing so by 14.2% the previous year. CFO Andre Maciel told analysts last week that Kraft expects to lift prices by only about 1% this year.
>
> Businesses' wholesale costs for many raw materials, contracts with suppliers and other "inputs" are still elevated, with a closely watched index of those expenses recently posting its biggest increase in five months. That makes it unlikely consumers will see brands making deep price cuts across the board anytime soon, analysts say.

A Chemical Linked to Fertility Problems in Animals Has Been Found in Oats. Should We Be Worried?

The Guardian reported:

> A new, peer-reviewed study from the Environmental Working Group (EWG) has determined that 80% of Americans are regularly exposed to the chemical chlormequat, which is linked to fertility and developmental issues in lab animals.
>
> The chemical is used to control growth in grain crops such as oats, wheat and barley in order to make them easier to harvest.
>
> Chlormequat has been found in samples of conventional oat products including General Mills Cheerios and Quaker Old Fashioned Oats in levels exceeding 100 parts per billion. However, in the context of a 14-ounce box of cereal, for example, only a trace amount of the chemical would be present.
>
> While concentrations of chlormequat in human urine are still well below current thresholds of concern, the EWG study authors found a "significant increase" of the chemical in 2023 urine samples from people living in Florida, South Carolina and Missouri, compared to samples from the last six years. Because chlormequat passes through the human body within 24 hours, the study suggests that these people are being regularly exposed to rising levels of chlormequat — probably through the consumption of oat-based food items such as oatmeal and granola.

France Eases Pesticide Controls in Sop to Farmers

Politico reported:

> France will drop strict national controls on pesticide sales in favor of a more lax indicator used in the European Union, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced on Wednesday in unveiling further measures to appease restive farmers.
>
> In a second move, France will bar imports of food products containing traces of thiacloprid, a pesticide that is banned in the EU, to ensure that French farmers aren't put at a disadvantage to foreign competitors, Attal said at a press conference.
>
> The announcement comes after weeks of demonstrations in France and around Europe where angry farmers have protested against the EU's green bureaucracy and competition from imports that aren't subject to the same environmental standards.

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